

# WINTER WILDLIFE ACTIVITY BOOKLET



Canolfan y Dechnoleg Amgen  
Centre for Alternative Technology

# EXPLORE WINTER WILDLIFE

Winter can be a quiet time for wildlife. Hedgehogs, dormice and bats hibernate during the colder months as do butterflies and some bees. Other creatures may find a snugly place to shelter during very cold weather, only venturing out for food and water.



But this sleepy time of year can be a fantastic time for spotting birds looking for food, water and shelter in our outdoor spaces and it can be especially exciting to spot species that are only here during their winter migration.



However, warmer, wetter winters due to changes in our climate have led to some of our own short distance migratory birds giving up their journeys south altogether. If you watch closely you may see species such as blackcaps and chiffchaffs nesting here over winter.

Providing food and water for birds at this time of year is a great way to support them, and to attract them to your outdoor space where you can watch from a distance.

**Can you spot these resident and migratory birds and draw or describe them below?**



**Robin** In winter our resident breeding pairs of robins are joined by European migrants. These increased numbers make them a common garden bird in winter, and for this reason have become a symbol of Christmas.

1



**Goldfinch** These striking birds can be seen regularly grabbing a snack at a feeder in winter. They love seeds, particularly niger seeds so add these to your feeding station to attract them.

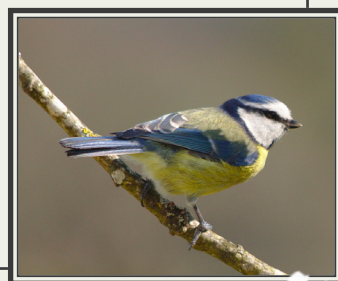
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**Bluetit** Bluetits are easy to spot and are a common visitor to garden feeders. They love seeds and high fat foods so they will love a homemade pine cone fat ball feeder.

3



**Nuthatch** Nuthatch numbers are increasing in Britain and are spreading northwards. Watch out for them hopping down tree trunks in search of food with their specially adapted feet.

4



## Blackbird

Like other thrushes, in winter our blackbird numbers are increased by migrants from Europe. These visitors can sometimes have slightly darker bills.



5



## Long-tailed tit

Flocking together in sociable groups, Long-tailed tits can often be spotted at a well-stocked garden feeder. They particularly love fat balls.

6



# WINTER WILDLIFE WORD SEARCH



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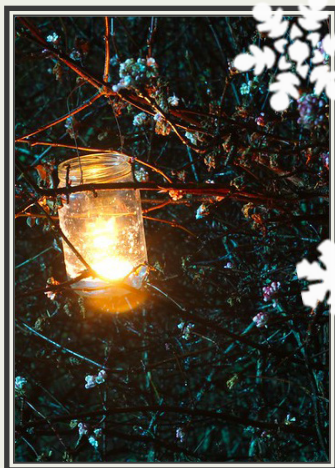
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HIBERNATE  
ROBIN  
EVERGREEN  
FROST

WINTER  
BERRIES  
MIGRATION  
NESTBOX  
FEEDER



# WINTER WELLBEING: TREE DRESSING

Winter in the UK can feel like it goes on forever. With cold, drizzly days and dark evenings it's easy to want to stay indoors but it is important to get outside in nature when we can. Spending time in nature has been proven to improve our mood. Just a short walk in your nearest green space can lift the spirits and energy levels, especially on a rare sunny winter's day.



Dressing a tree indoors at Christmas time is something we're all familiar with but how about choosing your favourite outdoor tree to dress at this dreary time of year. In these long dark days a tree dressed with treats for wildlife can be a cheerful thing to look at and a great way to celebrate the importance of trees.

## **1** Choose your tree

Following Covid-19 guidelines and restrictions, choose your favourite tree or shrub in your outdoor space. Dressing a public tree is fine as long as you have permission from the owner, there might be a tree at school or in a community centre that would love your attention.



## 2 Time to get creative

Have a think about what you love about your tree, could you celebrate this in your decorations? Use drawing, words, poems, organic materials and colourful, environmentally friendly objects but think about your materials carefully.



- Safe materials. Your decorations might blow off so make sure they're not going to become harmful rubbish by using organic materials you've found, plastic free paper and card and non-toxic paints.

- Edible decorations. Can your decorations double as a treat for wildlife? A pine cone feeder, hanging fruit or strings of bird friendly snacks can be great to look at as well as encouraging wildlife into your garden.



## 3 Celebrate your tree

As long as it is safe to do so, why not plan a wintry celebration with your family, with drinks and snacks to help you celebrate the best of the season.



# SUPPORT WINTER WILDLIFE AT HOME

For our wildlife friends finding food, water and shelter can be tricky at this time of year as well as pressure from bigger forces such as loss of natural habitat, destruction of biodiversity and natural eco-systems, and global warming.

The good news is that it is the perfect time of year to lend our friends a helping hand and to make careful changes to our lifestyles to be more environmentally friendly for wildlife and our own wellbeing. We've put together lots of fun, inspiring and empowering ways you can help nature at home, and there are many, many more things you can do once you get started.

## LEAVE OUT SNACKS

In the winter months wildlife may find it hard to find natural foods such as berries, seeds, insects, worms and fruit. Leave them snacks of fruit, seeds, nuts and grated cheese.

A pine cone treat feeder is a fun thing to make and hang up at home for birds, and taking a wintry walk to collect pine cones can be refreshing even on a blustery day.



You will need

- A collection of dry pine cones
- Wire or string
- Nut or seed butter (make sure it's the kind without added salt or sugar) or veggie suet (a great source of essential winter fats)
- Bird seed mix (a nutritious mixture of vitamins and minerals to give birds energy and help them stay healthy)
- Bowl and spoon

## 1 Collect your cones

Wrap up warm and head outside to collect your cones but check the Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines in your area before you go. While you're out try to spot your favourite things about winter or something you've never noticed before, and don't forget to BREATHE. Deep breaths of fresh air has a calming effect on our minds and bodies which makes us feel GREAT.

Bigger cones make fuller feeders so try to collect the best of the bunch but be careful to avoid prickles and wash your hands when you get home.

## 2 Dry and tie

Leave your cones somewhere to dry so that they open up then tie a length of wire or string around your cone so you can hang them in a tree or on a bird feeder stand.



### 3 Make your mix

In a clean bowl mix together the nut butter or veggie suet with the bird seeds. Make enough to squish into your cones. Don't be afraid to use your hands but don't eat any of the mixture. This recipe is just for birds.



### 4 Fill your cone

Using your hands (it's messy but fun) squish the mixture into the cone making sure you fill all the gaps between the seeds.

### 5 Feed the birds

Hang up your feeder in a spot that birds can easily reach but don't forget that you want to see it too, so find a spot that is easy for you to watch from a distance or from a cosy window (it is still winter after all!)

### 6 Who can you spot?

There are tons of bird identification books, guides and free apps out there that will help you become more familiar with your winged friends.

TOP TIP. When you're watching keep a camera or notebook and pen close by so that you can record your sightings. It might help you identify a new species to your feeder or witness new behaviour.



## PROVIDE FRESH WATER

It is important that wildlife has access to fresh, clean water all year round but it's particularly important in winter when natural sources may be frozen. By providing a drink you could encourage all sorts of wildlife into your garden but make sure to place a stone or an upside down plant pot in deeper water so that any animals that go in for a swim can get out again.

## BREAK THE ICE

A pond in your garden is a wonderful habitat for wildlife. In the warmer months frogs, toads and even hedgehogs will enjoy a swim and pond insects make great snacks for bats. But in winter take care to not let your pond freeze over. Gently pour warm water onto the ice so that trapped gases can escape, but don't use boiling water as it could hurt wildlife like toads who are sheltering underneath.



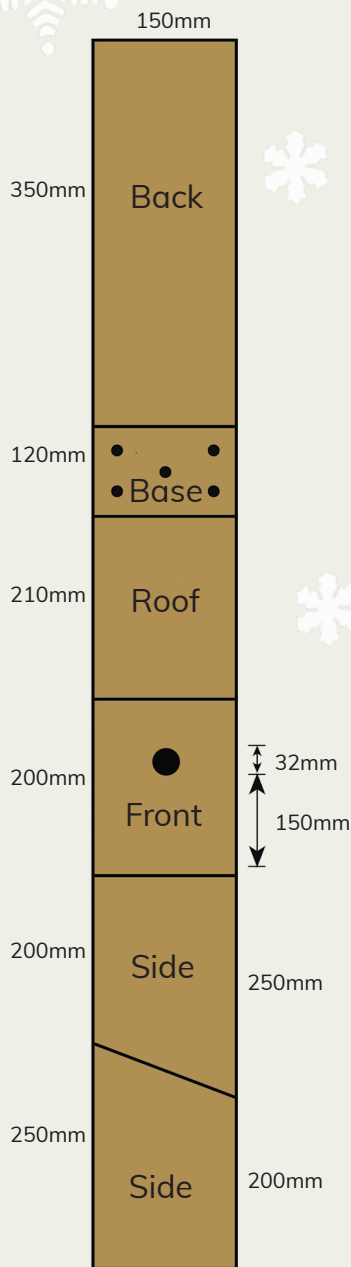
## CREATE A COSY CORNER

It's not just us that wants a cosy place to cuddle up in during winter. Creatures big and small need a safe, warm, dry space to shelter in on the coldest days but you don't need lots of materials

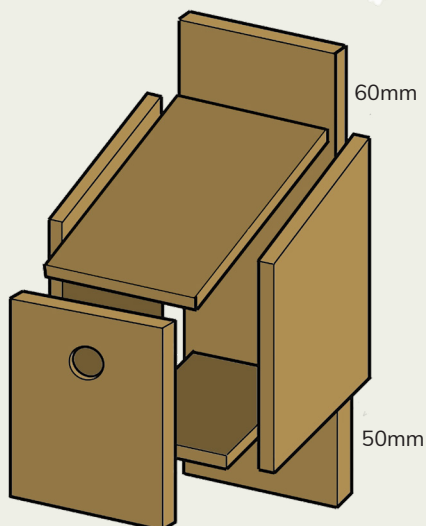
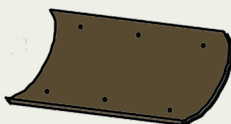
to provide this, you just have to be a bit untidy! Let patches of your garden grow wild. Long grass, piles of leaves and compost heaps all make great winter homes for wildlife. If you do want to get creative this winter why not build a nest box for birds using the instructions below. You will need an adult to help you throughout this activity.

## You will need

- A plank of FSC wood 15cm wide x 1.4m long x 1.5-1.8cm thick and not pressure treated
- Pencil and tape measure
- Saw
- Nails
- Strip of waterproof rubber
- Drill
- Optional: a hole saw/cutter for making 3.2cm holes
- Ladder
- Screws
- Non- toxic art materials
- An adult to lend a hand



Rubber hinge







## **1 Find the perfect spot for your box.**

Your box will need a sheltered, quiet spot around 3m off the ground and to be North / East facing to protect it from ground predators, too much sunlight or rain.

## **2 Cut your timber**

Measure and cut your timber to the right size as shown (you might need to ask an adult for help here). If you haven't got a hole cutter to make a 3.2cm "front door" hole you can use a jigsaw (not the puzzle) to cut a square of the same size.

## **3 Make the structure**

Nail all the pieces together except the roof. The back, front and sides should wrap around the base.

## **4 Attach the roof**

You'll need to open the box at a later stage to clean it out so attach a waterproof strip to make a hinge using screws between the top edge of the roof and the backing board. Try a piece of bicycle tyre inner tube, damp-proof membrane or roofing felt.

## **5 Get creative**

You should now have a complete nest box that you can decorate any way you want but don't forget to use non-toxic art materials.

## **6 Install your box**

Drill guide holes in the backing plate at the top and bottom of the box. Taking care, fix the box in place using a ladder, screws and rawlplugs (if needed).





# SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES



Stories are essential. Telling stories, swapping photos and videos and sharing experiences with others is a fantastic way to inspire one another to support wildlife and take action against climate change. It's easy to share too.

**JOIN A COMMUNITY.** Ask an adult to look on social media for any local to you groups who organize different get-togethers for wildlife watching, beach clean-ups, community woodland restoration and much more.

**SHARE YOUR SNAPS.** If getting out and about is tricky then ask an adult to find a family friendly wildlife photography sharing group on social media. It's wonderful to see what other people have caught on camera and could inspire you to do the same.

**BE A CITIZEN SCIENTIST.** Taking part in local and nationwide nature campaigns and surveys can be a great way to contribute to real life science. Different themed surveys happen throughout the year and you don't need special equipment to take part, just pick your favourite creature and get spotting.

**WILD CREATIVITY.** When you feel inspired the possibilities are endless. How about making a wildlife friendly poster for your window to help others support wildlife too. Or, write a nature blog or poetry of your nature encounters that can be shared with friends, family or online.

**SHARE WITH CAT.** We love to hear all about your nature explorations. Ask an adult to share your tales, photos and videos with us through our social media.



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